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the ASLEF Journal

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A high speed rail network for Britain? NOT SO FAST ...



THE GOOD NEWS... Britain has its first high-speed rail line. It's a breakthrough - we really should have something to celebrate! After all, we've joined the European big boys! Trains in the UK can now hit speeds of over 180 mph!

THE BAD NEWS... The high-speed track is only 70 miles long. It runs from Kent to London and the only trains that run on it is the Eurostar.

THE WORSE NEWS... It doesn't look like getting any better. The government likes the idea of a high-speed North-South line - which would practically eliminate the attraction of domestic flights. But it doesn't feel inclined to do anything about it.

Frankly it's getting embarrassing how far we trail behind our European neighbours.

The French have been developing high speed trains for 40 years. The French rail company's (SNCF) Train de Grande Vitesse (TGV) holds the record speed for a conventional train (see page 9). The country has an ever-expanding network of track that can support TGVs.

Germany has a dense network of high-speed tracks, and high-speed lines run through Spain, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands.

In Spain, RENFE is planning a Barcelona-Madrid run that will, when it opens, accomplish the trip of 375 miles in two-and-a-half hours at a speed of up to 230 mph. This is a quarter of the time it takes by car and quicker than by plane. There is already a high-speed line between Madrid and Seville using French-style trains.

In the Netherlands a high-speed line between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp is expected to begin operating this year.

So why is it that when it comes to high-speed links the UK is so far behind its western counterparts?

The most telling point is that France has been planning high-speed trains for four decades. That will never happen in this country under the present privatised system - for the simple reason that planning ends with the conclusion of a franchise. If a company has a franchise for 7 years, it has no interest in year 8. This means that long-term planning for UK rail is, and will remain, non-existent.

The other major problem is the government's half-hearted attitude towards climate change. If it was determined to cut carbon emissions, an obvious target would be the elimination of internal domestic flights. A high speed north-south rail link would remove the need and the demand. The public knows this, the union knows this and the Department for Transport knows this.

In fact, everyone knows it is true: but no one does anything about it. Perhaps it is just a symptom of the fact that the wheels of government move slowly: the sad fact is that the wheels of trains are having to do the same thing as a result.

Scottish training funding moves closer

KEVIN LINDSAY, the union's organiser in Scotland, said that he was 'delighted' to have confirmation that stage one of ASLEF's bid for European Social Fund funding has been successful. 'It's a tribute to our union that we've made it to this stage', Kevin says.

The union applied for money to support Union Learning in Highlands and Islands and looks on course to have funds to cover half the staff costs of

the exercise. The bid was made with First Scotrail as well as the colleges concerned - Stow College, North Highland College and Inverness College.

The object of the initiative is to 'meet employee learning needs in the areas of basic literacy, ICT, numeracy and languages as identified by peer workplace Union Learning Reps. This provision, delivered within participant's place of employment supplemented by

a Virtual Learning Environment under the auspices of the TUC Education Service, will increase the level of job-related skills and reinforce sustainable employment.'

It is intended that the project will run throughout 2008. However, Kevin is not content to sit on his laurels. 'We're also hoping to be successful with our bid for the Lowlands,' he says. 'We should find out next week how we've got on.'



FORTY YEARS OF THE BREATHALYSER

9 October this year marked the 40th anniversary of the first breathalyser test – and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents took the opportunity to step up its campaign to persuade Government to reduce the limit to 50mg per 100ml. Of course any train driver with 50 mg of alcohol would face dismissal today.

Rospa says thousands of deaths and serious injuries have been avoided since October 1967, when the current drink-drive limit (80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood) became a legal requirement and roadside testing was introduced. In 1967 it attributed 13,000 fatal and serious casualties each year to drink, while last year 2,500 people were killed or seriously injured in crashes involving illegal alcohol

No strike - as it could harm the economy!

A COURT in the eastern German city of Chemnitz ruled last month that long-distance trains could not be included in a strike because of 'concerns that it would harm the economy'. The court ruled that the strike had to be limited to local trains.

GDL union leader Manfred Schell was astonished saying, 'We cannot comprehend why we can't strike on freight and long-distance lines.'

The GDL union is in dispute with Deutsche Bahn because it says its members are underpaid when compared with train drivers



elsewhere in Europe.

In June, after two larger unions representing 134,000 workers launched a series of small strikes, Deutsche Bahn agreed to inflation-beating rises of 4.5%. GDL however, broke ranks with the other rail unions and rejected the deal. It is seeking a new contract of employment and rises of up to 31%.

Ray of hope for miners

RETIRED driver Ray Cooper came to headquarters last month to present the union with a new ASLEF-NUM badge he's struck to raise funds for the 'National Justice for Mineworkers' campaign.

23 years ago Ray was in the Orpington branch when he struck a badge to raise money for striking miners and their families. 'It said, 'United we stand' on the back of the original badge and that message is equally true today,' Ray says. 'This badge is dedicated to all the miners, their families and you, the supporters who stayed loyal.'

Ray presented the ASLEF museum with copy 100 of the badge as well as a commemorative ASLEF-NUM plate from the miners' strike.

The cost of this double sided badge is £5 + £1



Ray Cooper with Kevin Lindsay who was Acting General Secretary for a week while Keith Norman was away. Inset: The ASLEF/NUM badge

P&P. If you would like to order one of the badges, please send a cheque for £6 payable to Ray Cooper to 94 Cloonmore Ave, Orpington, Kent, BR6 9IQ or email gfabian@aslef.org.uk

DON'T FORGET THE LORRY PETITION The executive committee would like to remind members of the email petition about 60 tonne lorries on the 10 Downing Street website. Hugh Bradley and Andy Morrison say that the petition is an excellent and easy opportunity to let government know our attitude towards 'roadtrains'.

The wording of the petition (which now has over 1,100 signatures) is, 'We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to Stop the threat of 60 to 80 tonne lorries on UK roads.'

It can be accessed by going to <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Ban60tonlorries/>

NEWS OF THE WALLIES

THE general secretary wrote to the News of the World to complain about a 2-page article the 'newspaper' ran about the 'Scandal of the Railway Sleepers'. It all hung on the word of some anonymous bod who 'confessed that he fell asleep in his cab' while it dashed along from Reading to Bath.

Keith wrote, 'ASLEF shares your concerns about possible driver fatigue – but the dramatic story you reported is neither credible nor possible. Every UK train has a Driver Safety Device – an updated dead-man's handle – which stops a train if controls are not activated within a certain time. The ex-driver who told you he slept for an hour while his train careered along the track was simply not telling you the truth. I'd be grateful if you could correct his fabrication.'

Brake problems stop London lines for repairs

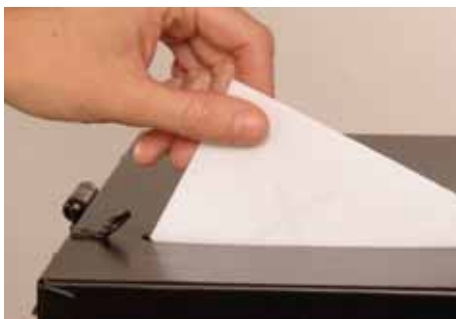
AN ASLEF tube train driver discovered a fault on the braking system of trains on the Circle Line last month. He reported it and management agreed to remedy the situation – but in the interim a similar fault was discovered on other trains on the Circle and Hammersmith and City lines.

When it became apparent that the fault had not been remedied the following day, drivers declined to take out trains which were faulty and a potential safety risk.

The union said that once the necessary safety modifications had been made, the service would gradually return to normal. This happened – but not before management characteristically tried to prevent peace breaking out! One management statement had suggested that the driver who had pointed out the deficiency originally had done so to deliberately 'cause disruption'. This



allegation was later withdrawn in writing and the company has conceded that there had been a design fault.



CENTRAL TRAINS BALLOT ON MANAGERS DRIVING TRAINS The executive committee has agreed that ASLEF members working for Central Trains should be balloted for industrial action, accusing the company of ignoring current agreements about Driver Managers driving trains.

'Discussions on this issue have proved utterly unproductive,' declared general secretary Keith Norman. 'We have an agreement that establishes that Driver Managers will only take trains out in the event of a safety problem. The company has consistently failed to honour that agreement.'

'Management have made no attempt to resolve the situation, and their inaction makes conflict the only possible outcome. ASLEF is not in the habit of signing agreements and instantly ignoring them – and we will not tolerate that from any employer. Central's attitude makes a mockery of orderly industrial relations.'

Ballot papers will be sent out later this week, dependent on possible postal disruption.'

The ballot will conclude at the end of the month and at that time, assuming a positive vote, the union will determine what sanctions it intends to take against the company.

UNION TO BALLOT MIDLAND MAINLINE OVER PENSIONS ASLEF is balloting its members in Midland Mainline (MML), accusing the company of 'underhand tactics' by its refusal to enhance pension provision when pay improvements have been agreed in the past.

Regional organiser Mick Whelan says the particular difficulty has arisen from a 'bizarre' management interpretation of a pay deal struck in 2001 – and the union says that some members' pensions will be £2,000 to £3,000 down as a result of the company's interpretation of the agreement.

MML claims that pay agreements only covered 'future service' – which the union contests. 'This was not the agreement we struck and the union will not tolerate any lessening of our members' pension provision,' said general secretary Keith Norman.

SILVERLINK BALLOT OVER PENSIONABLE PAY In a similar dispute to that in MML, the Executive Committee has begun a ballot of ASLEF members in Silverlink over pensionable pay.

The union is convinced that the company has broken agreements about the levels of pay to be calculated for pension purposes which has led to a shortfall of some £2 million. This, it says, could mean ASLEF members receiving thousand of pounds less than their entitlement when they retire.



DRS 2007 PAY In an internal referendum DRS members voted by 62% in favour of accepting a three year pay offer: consisting of 4.8% in Year 1, 3.25% or RPI (whichever is the greater) in Year 2, and 3.5% or RPI (whichever is the greater) in Year 3.

VIRGIN WEST COAST & VIRGIN CROSS COUNTRY - 2007 PAY OFFER

In an internal referendum Virgin West Coast members voted by 79.6% and Virgin Cross Country voted by 94% in favour of the 2007 pay offer of a 4.6% increase in salaries and dynamic allowances.

NORTHERN RAIL COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The following reps have been elected to the Northern Rail Company Council. M Maher, Edge Hill; A Hourigan, Newton Heath; J Evans, Manchester Piccadilly; P Gray, Blackpool; G Cox, Doncaster; P Cawood, Leeds; R Porter, Gateshead & Newcastle; R Coulthard, York.

CHILTERN RAILWAYS - 2007 PAY The Executive Committee accepted the 2007 revised Chiltern pay offer of an increase of 5.1%.

CHILTERN RAILWAYS- REST DAY

WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Chiltern Railways until 28th September 2008 subject to continued satisfactory reports in relation to recruitment, training and depot establishments with the continued monitoring by our representatives at Local Level and Company Council level and full written reports provided by the Company Council to this EC on a two monthly basis.

ARRIVA TRAINS WALES - REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on Arriva Trains Wales until 8th December 2007.

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT -

COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS The following reps have been elected to the First Capital Connect Company Council; P Emmington, Cambridge; P R Baines, Hitchin.

FIRST CAPITAL CONNECT - REST

DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on First Capital Connect until 29th December 2007.

FREIGHTLINER HEAVY HAUL- BUSINESS COUNCIL ELECTION T.

Venson, Rugby has been elected to the Heavy Haul Business Council.

C2C - REST DAY WORKING ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on C2C until 27th October 2007.

GATWICK EXPRESS - COMPANY

COUNCIL ELECTION The following reps have been elected to the Gatwick Express Company Council; S Biggs, Battersea; T Finch, Battersea.

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International transport unions support Burmese protests

TRADE UNIONISTS have joined other political and humanitarian groups across the world in protesting against the suppression of pro-democracy campaigners in Burma. ASLEF members were among those who responded to appeals by the ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) to join a protest in London.

ITF general secretary David Cockcroft said, 'The international

trade union movement has been at the forefront of the campaign to isolate and boycott this hateful regime - despite all those who have found excuses to continue dealing with it. Trade unionists around the world will take their protests to Burmese embassies and pledge their support for all those fighting for democracy. Their bravery is an example to us all.

'The violence has to stop, the



IFT demonstrators at the Burma protests in London

government has to go.'

The Burma Campaign UK accused the British government of putting up a 'series of

excuses' over 10 years for failing to deliver its election pledge to mount unilateral sanctions against the Burmese junta.



Fuel duty up – but where is it off?

LATE last month an additional 2p was added to fuel duty – but the new Chancellor Alistair Darling did not reiterate a 2000 Budget speech commitment from his predecessor. At that time Gordon Brown said rises in road fuel duties would go to a new ring-fenced fund for roads and public transport.

Between 1997 and 2006 the cost of travelling by car decreased in real terms by 10%. At the same time – according to Hansard - the cost of travelling by train increased by 6%, and by bus by 13%.

ASLEF SUPPORTS

FRENCH RAIL UNIONS The union has told its French counterparts that ASLEF entirely supports their industrial action. 'We appreciate the need to take action in the face of an employer that is determined to rip up agreements. We endorse your right to a pension scheme - freely negotiated with your employer. And finally we admire the resolve of the French unions to defend themselves against an extremist government.'

Union acts on trade union freedom

LAST month the union wrote to all Labour and Lib Dem MPs urging their support for the proposed Trade Union Freedom Bill. Keith Norman told politicians, 'A new Trade Union Freedom Act would ensure better protection for striking workers; simpler and fairer industrial action balloting and notice procedures; reform of the use of injunctions by employers; allowing solidarity action in certain circumstances; prevention of the use of replacement labour during strikes and trade union rights for prison officers.'

He argued that unions play a vital role in raising living standards and fighting poverty and insisted that 'the removal of trade union rights has contributed to the increase in

inequality over the last 25 years' and therefore 'giving unions greater powers would increase their freedom to fight against poverty and inequality.'

The general secretary asked MPs to support the Bill and to join the 125 politicians who have already signed Early Day Motion 532 which supports the campaign. That EDM was submitted by John McDonnell and calls on Parliament to recognise that free and independent trade unions are 'a force for good and vital to democracy'. It regrets 'trade union rights are now weaker than those introduced by the 1906 Trades Disputes Act' and calls for 'better protection for workers, simplified ballot procedures and limited supportive action'.



Venezuela President Hugo Chavez

Venezuela offers Cuba rail cash

VENEZUELA is to lend Cuba 100 million US dollars to help modernize its rail system according to Cuban Transportation Minister Jose Luis Sierra. He added that improvements will be made in the signalling and switching systems and trains will be able to travel at 100 kph instead of the current 40 kph. The loan from Venezuela's Social and Economic Development Bank (Bandes) will also allow an increase to the rolling stock fleet.

Sierra said that railways that enable the swift movement of passengers and cargo are essential for Cuba's economic recovery.

Concern over Southall suicides

One-third of all UK rail suicides occur in West London's Indian-dominated Southall – and a 'disproportionately high number' of these fatalities are women of Asian origin, according to a report from First Great Western. This is the only stretch of UK track where rail suicides are rising.

The women's group Southall Black Sisters insists that, 'The high instance of Asian women suicides is linked to abusive practices within Asian families.' Lord Bhikhu Parekh, Professor of Political Philosophy at Westminster University, commented that the rise in number of suicides among Indian women showed the lack of any community group monitoring issues and problems specifically affecting such women.

GLASGOW MARCH The Scottish TUC is organising a rally and march in Glasgow on Saint Andrew's Day – 24 November at 10.30. The theme of the event will be 'No Slavery! No Racism!'. At 1100 a march will set off to an Anti Racism Rally at the Glasgow Film Theatre in Rose Street.

After 4 Prime Ministers and 15 Transport Secretaries...

Crossrail is going ahead!

LAST month the Prime Minister confirmed that Crossrail – the project to build high-frequency railway connections across Central London – is to go ahead. It was first proposed 4 Prime Ministers, 6 Chancellors and 15 Transport Secretaries ago – and over £400 million has already been spent in the various planning stages!

ASLEF and the other rail unions, along with most of the capital's politicians and business community have long supported Crossrail – but progress has been slow because of financial wrangling. The final piece in the jig-saw was the City of London agreeing to provide £300 million towards the £16 billion bill.

The government will pay for a third, businesses will pay for a third and the rest will be raised from 'advance ticket revenues'.

The route of the proposed line will run east-west with one connection to the west and two to the east. This Crossrail route will travel from Heathrow and Maidenhead in the west, to Paddington, through the West End, the City of London and Canary Wharf and onto East London, with the route splitting



into two branches at Whitechapel, with one branch travelling onto Shenfield in Essex and the second branch passing through the Royal Docks and onto Abbey Wood in Kent.

THE POSITIVES

Apart from the contribution it will make to a cleaner and less traffic-congested capital Crossrail will

- generate estimated benefits of £37bn to £68bn (present value) to the UK economy over 60 years.
- provide additional national tax revenues of at least £14.8bn, assuming Crossrail services begin in 2015.
- save time which will benefit business by some £4.86bn.
- provide 40% of the extra rail

capacity London needs by 2015, according to Transport for London

THE NEGATIVES

● Some freight train operating companies are opposed to the current plans for Crossrail, saying it would use up much of the remaining rail capacity within the London area, and does not provide the necessary extra capacity on connecting lines. This will make it harder to route freight services from the southern ports to the north and will increase freight transit times.

● The Rail Freight Group is concerned that the Bill gives Crossrail trains priority over the slow lines to the west and east, which could hinder freight movement.



ASLEF gives evidence on PPP to Commons

ASLEF last month submitted evidence to the House of Commons Transport Committee on Public Private Partnership and London Underground. In essence, the union is sceptical of the success of PPP – because to date both the companies at the forefront of the London PPP – Tube Lines and Metronet – have failed to deliver their promises. A not-for-profit service is much preferable.

The collapse of Metronet alone demonstrates much that is wrong with PPP. It has failed both financially – by going bankrupt – and in terms of service. Moreover the cost to the public is vast with the government now locked into a 30-year legal agreement which involves funding LUL at an average of £1 billion a year till 2009.

The fragmentation caused by the PPP has led to a lack of accountability and responsibility. This has resulted in disruption for passengers and confusion for drivers and their unions – as they are often not sure who they are supposed to address their issues to. Meanwhile safety has not improved – and derailments have actually increased.

The full submission is available in the Research section of ASLEF's website (www.aslef.org.uk)

RMT says rail firms are tax dodgers

The RMT has accused Britain's rail firms of channelling money which should be used for investment into dividends for their shareholders. The union says 'deferred tax' funds which should be poured into improving Britain's rail transport network are instead boosting dividend payouts.

The report – drawn up by tax

expert Richard Murphy of Tax Research – says the rail industry's six largest train-operating companies and three rolling-stock leasing companies are effectively avoiding having to pay a total of £1.3 billion.

Richard Murphy said, 'Rail companies are hiding behind accounting rules when presenting their figures that let

them suggest they're paying more tax than they are. That means the huge hidden subsidy the tax system gives them is not apparent. It should be.'

Bob Crow called on the nine firms to pass the profits on to passengers and use them to fund railway engineering works. 'It might be legal but it shouldn't be,' he said.

Iranian Government 'risks blinding Osanloo'

THE ITF (International Transport Federation) says the Iranian government is deliberately risking the sight of imprisoned trade union leader Mansour Osanloo by refusing emergency treatment that he desperately needs to

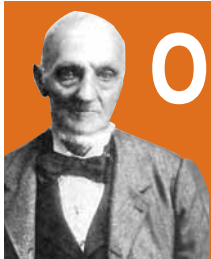
treat injuries to his eyes.

The damage was sustained during an attack by government security forces in May 2005. Brother Osanloo's prison doctor has conceded that if he is not treated within the next two weeks he could

go blind.

ITF General Secretary David Cockcroft says this is all part of attempts to 'weaken and undermine the most significant union leader in Iran today'. The organisation has released a short film called

'Freedom Will Come – the Story of Mansour Osanloo' which can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=in-vF2LviTk and by following the link at www.itfglobal.org/solidarity/osanloo2.cfm



ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK?

Andy Ross, from Fort William, wrote to the Journal after reading the article 'Edward Entwistle – The Man Who Drove the Rocket' in the September Journal. It encouraged Andy to raise some interesting points both about train speed and rail investment. This is what he had to say ...

Edward Entwistle was the first of our (train-driving) breed, and it seems that very little has changed during the nigh-on 180 years that have passed since this 14-year-old lad was first lurching from pillar to post on 'The Rocket' in 1829. If anything, we're going backwards!

In the 1830s it took an hour to cover the 31 miles from Liverpool to Manchester. In

2007 a class 6 freight is booked to depart Mossend at 08:23 and after covering the 30 miles to Craigendoran Junction it is due to pass through at 09:47, 84 minutes later.

This is 24 minutes longer than Driver Entwistle was doing in 1830!

If the stress of running at constant single yellow to red signalling sequences is not bad

enough, the next 100 miles to Fort William will take another mind-numbing 5 hours and 28 minutes - with a booked arrival time of 15:15. That is nearly seven hours to do 130 miles!

Progress, you would think, would be made by the introduction of modern locomotives in the guise of class 66 and 67s. Alas, the nose-bleed inducing speeds of the West Highland Line have been reduced yet again, with a multitude of underbridges having permanent speed restrictions of 20 mph and in the case of three, down to 10 mph! Not only has the track layout not changed in 113 years

but the infrastructure is not fit to carry either train weights or locomotives now in use.

Can anyone imagine the state of the country if we put the same amount of investment into roads that we have put into railways? In the West Highlands of Scotland almost nothing has changed since the line was opened in 1894. Imagine us trying to cope with all the cars and lorries on a single lane, pot-hole ridden dirt track - which is what the present A82 would have been in 1894. It would be impossible - so why are we being asked to provide a 21st century service on 19th century infrastructure where rail is concerned?

Had this been France there would be high-speed lines linking Thurso/Wick to Inverness and onwards to Glasgow via Fort William and Perth. This would have been in place 30 years ago with the entire network electrified - but alas we drew the short straw ...

THINKING OF SPEED



The latest update of the Guinness Book of Records came out last month - and its publishers kindly sent us information about some of the latest rail landmarks. We started off with speeds, but we hope you'll agree that the information just became more and more bizarre and interesting ...



THE FASTEST TRAIN IN THE WORLD is France's famous high-speed train, the TGV. It broke its own 17-year-old world speed record in April 2007 when it hit a top speed of 357.2 mph. The

specialty designed black-and-chrome train - code name V150 for 150 meters per second - is made up of three double-decker cars between two powerful engines totalling 25,000 horsepower. Its wheels are bigger than a normal TGV so it can reach high speeds without the engines overheating: the engine's windshield is reinforced.

THE HIGHEST SPEED ATTAINED BY A MANNED SUPERCONDUCTING MAGNETICALLY LEVITATED (MAGLEV) TRAIN is 581 km/h (361 mph) by the MLX01, operated by the Central Japan Railway Company and Railway Technical Research Institute, on the Yamanashi Maglev Test Line, Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan, on 2 December 2003.

FASTEST DIESEL TRAIN: The former British Rail inaugurated its HST (High Speed Train) daily service between London, Bristol and South Wales on 4 October 1976 using InterCity 125 trains. One of these holds the world speed record for diesel trains, at 238 km/h (148 mph), set on a test run between Darlington, County Durham, and York, North Yorkshire, UK, on 1 November 1987.



FASTEST PROPELLER DRIVEN TRAIN: The propeller-driven 'Rail Zeppelin' built by the German engineer Franz Kruckenberg reached a speed of 230 km/h (143 mph) during a test run on 21 June 1931

between Hamburg and Berlin, Germany. The vehicle received its nickname because of the large propeller mounted behind the passenger compartment and its lightweight steel and canvas construction. It was powered by a 433 kW (580 hp) BMW aircraft engine but never entered regular service.



THE LONGEST EVER TRAIN: The longest train ever was 7.353 km (4.568 miles) long, and consisted of 682 ore cars pushed by 8 powerful diesel-electric locomotives.

Assembled by BHP Iron Ore, the train travelled 275 km (171 miles) from the company's Newman and Yandi mines to Port Hedland, Western Australia, on 21 June 2001.



LARGEST RAILWAY STATION: The world's largest station by number of platforms is Grand Central Terminal, Park Avenue and 42nd Street, New York City, USA, built from 1903-13, which has 44 platforms.

They are situated on two underground levels with 41 tracks on the upper level and 26 on the lower. The station covers 19 ha (48 acres), and on average some 660 Metro North trains and 125,000 commuters use it every day.

● More Rail Stats and Facts are available in the Research section of the union website www.aslef.org.uk

DRIVER'S CASE SHOWS WHERE LAW CASH GOES



The Ministry of Justice is currently reviewing how personal injury claims are run by lawyers. One of the main drivers for the review is a line consistently peddled by the insurance industry and employers - that legal costs are always far more than the compensation awarded to claimants: Victoria Philips reports

CCOURT rules require that costs in a personal injury case have to be "reasonable, necessary and proportionate". The costs are built up from a combination of the amount of time a solicitor has to spend on a case and the outlays for things such as medical reports. The business community and insurers are forever blaming claimant lawyers such as Thompsons for stringing cases out and running up costs - we of course beg to differ.

Our experience in numerous seemingly straightforward personal injury cases is that those defending the case - usually an insurance company - deny responsibility in cases where the employer was clearly at fault. And they too often delay throughout, whether that is in answering letters or producing required documents.

We put most of it down to a them-and-us attitude - and to the claims handlers in insurance firms not having the experience to make decisions. But in some cases we are left wondering if the defendants unnecessarily fight cases to run up costs to bill their clients. If they are then they are acting

against the interests of their clients.

CASE COLLAPSES

Take a recent court case involving an ASLEF member - a London Underground driver - who was injured in 2003 when his cab seat collapsed. This was a seat that had historically been secured to the back of the cab but had been repositioned more recently onto the top of a metal pole which protruded from the cab floor.

As the member leaned forward to operate a lever, he leant on the arm rest and the back of the chair suddenly collapsed forward. His body twisted and he pulled muscles in his lower back and between his shoulders and injured his neck.

He was off work for eight weeks as a result.

The claim for damages we made for him alleged that the seat was either defective or the mechanism had been left unsecured by the previous driver. Colleagues of the injured man said they had had problems with the seats.

LUL's lawyers disagreed. They denied liability and continued to do so all the way



to trial. They came to this conclusion simply because there were no records showing a fault, even though the seat was, the defendants claimed, inspected regularly.

SAME OLD RECORD

We said that the absence of records merely meant that inspections had not taken place, or if they had, that they had not been properly carried out. When it came to it the defendants were unable to say who had carried out the inspections, which meant that when the case ended up in court (which it would never have done had the defendants not been so determined to deny liability) there was no one who had done an inspection to give evidence. In addition, the defendants were unable to provide any evidence to counter the allegation that the previous driver had failed to latch the chair properly.

As the case progressed it transpired that many important documents could not be produced because LUL apparently don't keep certain records beyond two years.

None of this was lost on the trial judge. He agreed with us that the defendants were being unreasonably difficult and obstructive for the sake of it and criticised them heavily for making no attempt whatsoever to settle the claim. He also recommended that Thompsons send a formal complaint to the defendant solicitors about their conduct of the case.

This was a case worth less than £2,000 in damages. It could have been settled out of court within months of the accident. But as a result of the defendant's shenanigans the costs of running the case over several years came to over 15 times that amount, which the court also agreed to award us. Were the costs in the case disproportionate? Yes, clearly. Were they disproportionate due to the fault of the claimant or his solicitors? Certainly not.

And this is just one example of many of defendant's bad behaviour which we have sent to the Ministry of Justice to consider as part of its ongoing review.

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www.aslef.org.uk

STAFF TRAVEL

STAFF TRAVEL: HOW FAR CAN WE GO?



- asks Simon Weller, on behalf of the union's executive committee. The union believes that many drivers are unsure about their entitlements – and points to some very strange anomalies ...

IN 1993 the Railways Act was carried through Parliament. Part of that legislation safeguarded the concessionary travel facilities enjoyed by employees of British Rail (BR) at the time that the public rail service was broken up and sold off.

The law guaranteed that anyone working for BR when it was privatised would retain the right to the conditions – including travel facilities - they had under BR. Travel facilities were deemed 'safeguarded'.

In the intervening 14 years, many people have left the industry, and many more have joined. We now have two sets of members as far as travel is concerned – because all those joining after 31 March 1996 have no safeguarded facilities – and it seems that they are now in a majority. A quick check of the union's membership data revealed that most of our members joined ASLEF after the cut-off date of 31 March 1996. So a majority of ASLEF members now have second-rate travel facilities.

It is always the union's policy to improve the benefits we receive - but this year both the Executive Committee and the union's Annual Assembly of Delegates decided to push travel facilities up the agenda. During the discussions as we began to map out a campaign, it became apparent that not everyone was fully aware of what existing entitlements actually are today – so we thought it would be useful to publish the brief summary shown below: If you would like more details, have a look at the rail staff travel website: <http://www.atoc.org/rst/>

This table shows an almost-farcical situation!

Non-safeguarded staff now **DO** have free foreign travel - but **DO NOT** have the right to travel free in their own country! If anyone needed proof of the inherent stupidity of a fragmented, privatised

	SAFEGUARDED (PRE 1/04/96)	TOCNE (POST 31/03/96)
Free Travel ("Boxes")	YES	NO
Privilege Travel (75% reduction)	YES	YES
Free Residential Travel	YES	NO (priv rate only)
LUL privilege travel	YES	NO
Other rail operators free travel	YES	SOME
(preserved, Eurostar etc)		
Other rail operators privilege travel	YES	YES
(preserved, Eurostar etc)		
European (FIP): Privilege	YES	YES
European (FIP): Free	YES	YES
Shipping: P&O (Dover – Calais)	YES	YES (priv rate?)
Shipping: Stena Ireland	YES	YES
Shipping: IOW	YES (pre 01/04/85)	NO
Shipping: IOM	YES	NO
Shipping: Caledonian MacBrayne	YES (pre 01/01/71)	NO
Non-European (FIP): Privilege	YES	YES
Non-European (FIP): Free	YES	YES



rail system... here is it on stilts!

Our aim is to restore free travel facilities across the UK network for all our members - regardless of their employer or the date they entered the industry. We are aware that this will not be an easy task as there is resistance from employers - particularly those within the freight sector.

It may be a long process to rectify the situation, but ASLEF has a proud record of delivering for our members on industrial matters. It will not be easy – but our demand is unquestionably fair and right.

TRAVEL SHORTS

ROSE-TINTED ATOC! ATOC has produced a 'Good Practice Guide - Management of Sub-Standard Performance by Train Drivers'. Unsurprisingly, ASLEF was not consulted in the production of the document. However, the union is eagerly awaiting further titles in the series. It can only be a question of time before we're able to read the 'ATOC Good Practice Guide - Management of Sub-Standard Performance by Managers' or the 'ATOC Good Practice Guide on Management of Sub-Standard Performance by Train Operating Companies'!



BRANSON MAY BACK DUTCH TRAM TRUCKS Sir Richard Branson took time off from his Virgin activities last month to chair the Jury of Europe-wide Green Challenge Award. The prize on offer for the best environmental plan was an

impressive half a million Euros.

As the Jury met in Westergasfabriek, there was much local support for Amsterdam's City Cargo initiative (operating cargo trams through the inner city). It did not win – but Sir Richard promised to take another look at the scheme and said he may financially support it himself.



MINISTER: 'RAIL WILL DOUBLE IN 30 YEARS' Ruth Kelly said last month that the railways would double in size over the coming 30 years. She said, "Railways are now on a stable and secure financial footing" - and that over the past decade, 40% more people are using trains, with rail freight increasing by 50%.

ASLEF DRIVES ROADT DEBATE AT CONFERENCE

THE UNION DELEGATION of the General Secretary, Colin Bright, Pauline Cawood and Tosh McDonald went to Labour's Conference this year aware that a study commissioned by the Department for Transport into the impact of running longer and heavier vehicles (LHVs) was about to be submitted to the government. Rumours suggested that the study, carried out by Heriot-Watt University, would favour these monster trucks.

'Monster' is hardly an exaggeration: they would be between 25.5 and 30 metres long and weigh between 60 and 84 tonnes. The 60-tonners would be 50% longer and over a third heavier than existing 44 tonne lorries!

The union had prepared for the conference by commissioning a National Opinion Poll and being instrumental in putting together a leaflet which was issued by the Freight on Rail group, to which the union is affiliated.



The ASLEF delegation at this year's Labour Party Conference spent much of its time lobbying government ministers and other politicians on the issue of 60 tonne trucks. The government is currently considering whether to allow massive 'roadtrains' onto UK roads. The union argues against this on the grounds of road congestion, safety considerations, environmental issues and the effect these trucks could have on the rail freight industry.



Freight on Rail members get ready to lobby the Labour Party Conference about larger and heavier vehicles. Left to right - James Croy (RMT) Keith Norman (ASLEF), Lord Berkeley (Rail Freight Group Chairman), Gerry Doherty and Frank Ward (TSSA)

75% SAY NO

The National Opinion Poll (NOP) survey shows that 75% of the general public is opposed to the introduction of 'road trains' - known as LHVs - onto UK roads. The survey further revealed that 80% of the general public favoured the government encouraging more freight to go by rail instead of by road.

Freight on Rail - a partnership of rail unions, rail freight companies and the



The delegation looks quite menacing as it approaches this non-ASLEF driver!

LONGER HEAVIER LORRIES

75% SAY 'NO'

A survey by National Opinion Polls at the end of August

- > **Explained** that the Government is deciding whether to allow 60 tonne lorries - over 50% longer and a third heavier than the present limit - onto UK roads
- > **Revealed** that 75% of the UK is opposed to their introduction
- > **Described** an alternative to allowing UK 'road trains' - with the government encouraging more freight to go by rail
- > **Disclosed** that 80% favoured moving more freight by rail.

75% SAY 'NO' TO ROADTRAINS

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- > TSSA
- > EWS
- > Freightliner
- > The Rail Freight Group
- > Campaign for Better Transport

80 tonne roadtrain weighs in a Challenger Tank

...and Olympic competition swimming pool

worse accidents

...are involved in twice as many fatal accidents as cars

here

...one from lorries have crashed by a quarter in a decade

lick to motorways

...how do they get there?

more congestion on major roads.

For more details contact: [phone number] Email: [email address]

75% SAY 'NO' TO ROADTRAINS

Please contact your MP at Transport Minister Jack Dromey and join the campaign!

government allows these monstrosities onto our roads. If the government is genuinely committed to the environment and travel safety it will reject these trials.'

Tony Berkeley, Chairman of the Rail Freight Group, said it was no surprise that 75% of the public are opposed to longer and heavier lorries. 'In part this is because the public doesn't believe the government is serious about enforcing standards on UK roads, whilst at the same time it puts strong regulatory and safety rules on rail, where the safety record is already immeasurably better.'

EWS pointed to DfT figures which show that 'the proportion of empty

GOT IN - NO SEAT



You may recall that last year, owing to the ASLEF delegation didn't get in they sailed past the scanners and marked and numbered seats. Only to discover that they had been by television cameras! This time though the ASLEF delegates were in the speech, when their space was occupied.

Initially the Westminster quartet showed a marked secretary 'reasoned' with them - and they saw Pauline Cawood was one of last year's delegates months later she received her 2006 pass - and

TRAINS NCE



ASLEF delegates to the Labour Party Conference: Pauline Cawood, Tosh McDonald, Colin Bright and general secretary Keith Norman.

running by large articulated HGVs has risen since 2003 from 26.5% to 27.4% - while the load factor of these vehicles has been falling more or less steadily since 1995 from 70% to 59%.

THE MINISTER'S RESPONSE

Transport Minister Ruth Kelly suddenly found she had a new best friend. Every time she turned round, there was Pauline Cawood!

NEW OR NOT?



The delegates' badges caused some confusion. The delegates were supposed to be going to the Labour Party Conference - but their ID

badges declared that this was a 'New Labour' conference. There was some grumbling on the floor about this, but the top table revelled in their New-ness.

Gordon Brown's hour long speech included the word 'new' no less than 48 times - but otherwise stuck to the strange style of Blair's contributions. This means there are no sentences, just half ideas and images, like when he said, 'New Labour: now the party of aspiration and community. Not just occupying but shaping and expanding the centre ground. A strong Britain; a fairer Britain.

'Whenever we see talent under-developed; aspirations unfulfilled; potential wasted; obstacles to be removed; this is where we - New Labour - will be. This is who we are.'

Fair enough. But it's difficult to know who we are when we're not sure what we're called.



On way to Labour Party conference: The GS and Colin Bright in deep discussion as they make their way to the conference hall.

ASLEF DOING THE ROUNDS ...

Apart from purchasing more traditional rounds, ASLEF delegates dutifully did the rounds of the transport fringe meetings. Here are some of the more interesting snippets ...



RUTH KELLY At a breakfast meeting organised by Serco to discuss cities and climate change...

Transport Minister Ruth Kelly said that there had been assumptions that economic choices were between 'rich and dirty' or 'poor but green'. 'This has to end,' she declared. 'We must aim for rich and green - and with planning and imagination it is possible to do this.'

She spoke about improvements in motor car technology and more energy-efficient housing, but appeared to be less certain when it came to transport. On one hand she said that transport decisions needed to be 'taken locally in local areas' and stressed the importance of 'encouraging industry to innovate'.

It is difficult to fault either proposition, but ASLEF believes that a national integrated transport service can only be secured by having strong central direction - which is not compatible with delegating powers to regional authorities and private franchises.



TIM O'TOOLE London Underground's American managing director said that he had been

asked, 'What is London Underground doing to help tackle climate change?' His response was simple: 'London Underground is a carbon reduction scheme,' he declared.

The underground system is the largest consumer of electricity in the country and he is pledged to conserve what energy is possible by examining closely how much energy is wasted in braking systems.

He also pointed out that for the first time in human history, more people live in cities than do not. 'This is why the models we have created in London - like the Congestion scheme - are so vital.'



STEPHEN JOSEPH The head of the 'Campaign for Better Transport' said that the British drive more miles per year than any European country with the exception of Norway.

EATS!

owing to over-enthusiastic security measures, et into the hall for the Conference. This year and guards, heading confidently for their

been unscrewed - taken out - and replaced ne the problem was sorted pronto.

in the hall had their seats - until the Leader's occupied by 4 Members of Parliament.

marked reluctance to move - but the general scampered away.

egation that was not allowed into the hall. 12 and here's the proof!



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Virgin Committee winds up with thanks to Ray

ON 18 September at Head Office we held the last meeting of the ASLEF / Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee. This body, which has existed since September 2003, includes all Health & Safety Representatives from Cross Country and West Coast and is supported by Company Council Secretaries and full-time officer Colin Smith.

Over the years the Committee has made some excellent and substantial advances in the role of the Safety Rep, ensured that all our reps are able to execute their duties to the best of their abilities and offered invaluable support.

It is being wound up in its current form because our colleagues from Cross Country will transfer to Arriva in November. Even though some excellent trade union relationships will be severed, we're confident that the committees will continue under their new franchises. My sincere thanks go to my Cross Country Colleagues for the sterling work, professionalism and dedication they have shown. I

wish you every success in your new franchise.

At the end of meeting we took the opportunity of honouring Committee member Bro Roy Goodhead who retires in January. It was considered a fitting time to recognise the contribution this Wolverhampton rep has made to health and safety.

After an introduction from the Chair - Bro Eamonn Tague - Bro Colin Smith made a presentation to Roy. On a personal note I have to say Roy has been an outstanding ambassador for the role of the Safety Representative. Since taking up the role in 1987 his enthusiasm and dedication have been benchmarks for others to aim for. He is respected by all his colleagues for the work he has undertaken and has been an invaluable asset to the Safety Committee and the network within Virgin Trains. I wish Roy the very best in his retirement and wish him well for the future.

Alan Moss National Secretary -
Virgin Trains Safety Advisory
Committee



Roy Goodhead and Full Time Officer Colin Smith



Roy Goodhead With VTSAC Sec. and Chair Alan Moss & Eamonn Tague

Stopped Tubes and fond farewells at Brompton

TWO items overshadowed West Brompton Branch's latest meeting - the events centred around C stock trains (see report on page 5) and wishing a fond farewell to 2 well-respected members.

A defect had been reported regarding the operation of the deadman's handle and braking system on the C stock trains which run on the District, Circle and Hammersmith & City lines. 3 units had failed. Management had taken a blasé attitude to the matter and refused an urgent meeting to discuss the issue.

A circular was sent out to all ASLEF drivers at 1700 and 30 minutes later the first ASLEF members withdrew their trains from passenger service until assurances

were given to the union's health & safety representatives. By 1830 no District Line C stock was running. Management, devastated by the speed of the drivers' reaction, failed to react until an attempt was made to call a meeting at 2200 - when the whole fleet was stationary!

The following day's early turn crews were briefed with ASLEF reps being present for the first book-ons, before a meeting was arranged. Management's arrogance inconvenienced thousands of passengers on 3 lines while ASLEF members stood fast until they were informed an agreement had been made and assurances given.

The branch then said its farewells to Instructors Didar Mankoo and Ian Blake. Ian



Best wishes to Didar

will be working for the Test Train arm of London Underground - while Didar and his family are emigrating to Australia. Ian was a depot rep at Acton Town and will be sorely missed for his lovely sense of good natured humour and guiding experience. A presentation was made to both members - and the branch wished them well for the future.

Dave Feldwick - Trains
Council Rep

DISTRICT 8 UPDATE

BACK DOOR GRIEVANCE

Early in 2006 London Underground (LU) tried to impose an Attendance, Performance and Conduct policy and procedure. If imposed, it could have cost hundreds of train operator jobs.

LU had attempted to go directly to the workforce (for consultation) by posting the new policies on their Intranet and at local depots. This back-fired dramatically - and industrial action was only just averted. The union reacted and LU withdrew the proposals from the Intranet and asked ASLEF for discussions.

The union has resisted changes to existing policies and ensured that discussions will be based on existing procedures. ASLEF also insisted that grievance would need to be sorted out first as it is fundamental to any disciplinary procedure. This was accepted, especially as the union pointed out that existing rules no longer comply with the law. We now have a time-table of meetings and expect positive progress sooner rather than later.

CAB REFURBISHMENT

Tubelines/Transplant Cab Refurbishment will have 2 phases. The first is the facelift and Loco L22 has been taken out of service. Once complete (at the end of the month) management plans to invite our representatives to check the changes and if all is OK, the rest will be rolled out.

Phase 2 is to develop a prototype where a slimmer battery will be used, enabling some further work to allow more space in the cabs. In this respect Loco L52 has been de-commissioned and will be transported to 'Prestons' to enable work on potential scope and design. After reps have seen the prototype it is hoped the roll out will be completed by the end of the year.



LEGIONS AT TONBRIDGE The 2007 Tonbridge Reunion was held at the Tonbridge British Legion on the 5 July and once again a good crowd turned out to enjoy themselves and make it all worth while. I was glad to see once again that many people who had worked on Southern travelled from all over the country to be there – even if Weddle was booked absent!

I was pleased to see ASLEF Company Council reps Perry Calvert (Ashford), Joe Holmer (Grove Park) and Peter Rolland (Tonbridge), Tonbridge local reps Steve Burgess and Trevor Mitchell and Ramsgate's Dave Bull came along to show support. Tony Holland and a colleague worked hard selling the raffle tickets that fund these events – and they need people with long arms and short pockets! Thanks to all who worked hard to make it a pleasant day..

Peter Smith Reporter - RMS

Three Liverpool Street drivers – 136 years on the rails!

THE Liverpool Street Welfare & Social Club hosted a retirement function on 29 September for 3 long serving drivers - all retiring after over 45 years service each. Every inch of floor space – and much of the surrounding pavement! - was taken up at 'Dirty Dicks' public house, near Liverpool Street Station as friends, colleagues, ex-colleagues and well-wishers bid long, happy and healthy retirements to Steve Ford, 'Bootsy' Wellington and Alan Chambers.

Presentations to mark their loyal service to the industry and the union were made by the Welfare and Social Club locally and by Tony West and Andy Morrison from ASLEF nationally.

Steve began his career on 7 May 1962 - two months after his 15th birthday. After a brief initial spell at Hornsey he spent the majority of his career at Stratford. When that depot closed, Steve worked at Liverpool Street from 1994 until he retired on 14 July. He drove the 'Intercity' between Liverpool Street and Norwich for Anglia, and then 'one'. Steve was one of the pioneers of 'Hull Trains' when drivers and units were seconded from Anglia Railways between 2000 and 2002, and he even worked 'Serco' Test Trains between London

and Edinburgh!! He retired after 45 years and 2 months service.

'Bootsy' started his career on the first day of 1962, and retired on 18 August this year after 45 years and 7 months service. He spent his entire railway career at Stratford, and, when that depot closed, Liverpool Street where he drove for Anglia and then 'one'. As 'Bootsy' was too young for shift-work when he first started on the railway, he did a brief spell in the office – which is where we believe his taste for not working Saturday afternoons originates!! 'Bootsy' is a well loved character everywhere he has worked, from Liverpool Street to Ipswich and Norwich. We'll miss him – and we'll have fond memories of working with him.

Lastly - but by no means least - we bid farewell to Alan who retired on 8 September, also after 45 years and 7 months service. When Alan started as a fireman on 5 February 1962, he was earning £4 a week. (Cynics say this is where he learnt to watch his money – a skill he still practises today!!) Alan moved to Liverpool Street from Stratford with the others in '94, and ended his career driving for Anglia and 'one' between Liverpool Street and Norwich. Alan is a very quiet man and a gentleman. We will miss him



Merry mood at sad send-off

very much.

We wish all three a very long, happy and healthy retirement – and hope they'll keep in touch. The place won't be the same without them!

Their retirement function was a great event, with the amount of people who came along reflecting how much we will miss this trio. Thanks to Tony West, Andy Morrison and 'snapper' PJ Smith – and a huge 'thank you' to everybody who attended for making the day a brilliant success - a day that Steve, 'Bootsy' and Alan will fondly remember for years to come.

John Thorpe Secretary – LSW&SC

KEEPING TRACK *WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO*

Looking through the pages of back issues of ASLEF's Locomotive Journal we find strikes are on the minds of writers 100 years ago – while 50 years ago one of our members describes that unusual event – a holiday abroad...

100 YEARS AGO

In the November 1907 issue, F.W. Brewer says the outcome of industrial action is more important than principle – and the magazine reports on a 37-year strike!

"Whatever may be the outcome of the existing struggle between the railway companies and the men, it is to be hoped that a strike will be averted. A strike can only be defended on the strongest possible grounds, and even then only when there is every chance of its being carried to a successful termination. It matters nothing, in the abstract, how just and reasonable the men's demands may be; if a strike is likely to fail in effecting the desired end it is worse than useless and becomes a calamity...."

And on the strike which lasted thirty-seven years ...

"One of the longest strikes on record was ended recently at Solingen after lasting thirty-seven years. In 1870 a large firm of cutlers, Ohlinger & Co., declined to accede to the demands of their workmen for an advance of wages or to countenance their belonging to the Cutlers' Trade Union. The men struck work, but Ohlinger & Co. managed to get along for some years with non-union men. Gradually the number of these has declined, and in order to secure a full force of hands they have capitulated on all points. "

50 YEARS AGO

The November 1957 edition included this account of a trip to the Continent by "Benachie" who penned the Scottish Notes:

"I elected to have a Continental holiday and decided to keep an eye, as far as possible, on our fraternity abroad ...on reporting to the leader of our party, I was somewhat amazed to find that a very large proportion of the personnel were footplatemen and their good ladies...

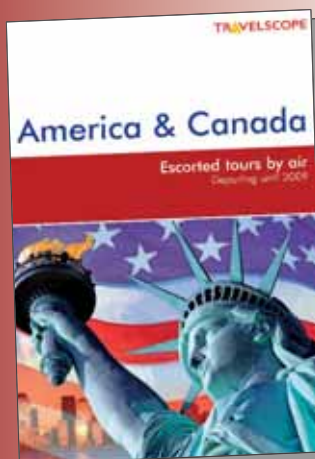
".....Customs formalities were of a very sketchy nature prior to our taking our places on the Spanish train. The intense heat made things rather uncomfortable – but that is what we had sought to justify this long journey – el Sol! As we approached our destination – Barcelona – all the beaches were agog with people enjoying the sun and the sea and, mostly, in coffee – coloured skins. Just what the doctor ordered. A wash and brush up and then along the famous Ramblas mingling with the Fiesta crowds. Before I had left the station, I had glimpsed at the footplate and, whilst the engine was presentable, there did not appear to be much comfort for the train crew. In fact, the triphone whistle was the only thing that appealed to me....."

Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

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Bill Read – last chair of Harrogate branch

IT IS with great sadness that I write these words.

After a long and courageous fight against illness, Bill Read (ex Neville Hill and Harrogate driver) has passed away, aged 55.

Bill started at Neville Hill depot in May 1974 and was made driver in December 1984 when he moved to Harrogate depot. He was the last branch chairman of Harrogate branch before it was merged with Leeds.

Bill was a stalwart of the union and was always ready to offer a sensible view on any issue being debated. The managers he dealt with on LDC business had a healthy respect for Bill – and he always commanded the respect of drivers at Harrogate.

I had the pleasure of accompanying him on the head office visit when Mick Rix was General Secretary. Mick thanked Bill for his contribution to the union's cause.

Bill was always known for his dry sense of humour and his ability to make the most of a situation that presented itself - whether it was a rostering error (when they never really knew where he was or what he was doing!) or an administration error that led to him benefiting in some way (all done with a twinkle in his eye!). He was one of the great characters of the footplate grade at Leeds/Harrogate.

Bill made many friends in his career as a driver and will be sorely missed, but not forgotten. Plans are underway to place a bench at Harrogate railway station in his memory, as a fitting tribute to much-loved work colleague. His passing has left a void in the lives of all those that knew him, but we have been left with some great memories.

Our thoughts and support are with Bill's wife Pat, sons Simon and Jim and daughter Helen.

Pete Upson - Leeds Branch

Henry John English - private, principled and loyal

HENRY JOHN ENGLISH – or Harry, as we all knew him - passed away peacefully on 30 August this year at the home of his son Peter, who had been caring for him during his illness. He was born on 2 January 1924.

Harry started work at Nine Elms MP in 1946 after leaving the Armed Forces. During his time serving with the Royal Marine Commandos during WW11 he was based at various times at Dieppe, Sicily, Italy, Yugoslavia, the Adriatic and Greece. Harry was a 'founder member' of the first RM Commando - that consisted entirely of volunteers.

Harry progressed in the footplate grades and worked as a Driver at several depots on the Western and Central Divisions of the Southern. When he became redundant at Coulsdon North EMUT he elected to move to St Pancras, and it was from this depot he retired in 1989.

Harry was a private man with very strong principles

and fierce loyalty to his friends. He helped many people during his working life, and expected nothing in return.

Admired by all those who met him, Harry will be mourned and sadly missed,

Our thoughts are with his family

Andrew Cook Secretary –
Selhurst Branch

Gordon Jones - Gloucester (1935-2007)

GORDON began as an engine cleaner and continued as a fireman at Ferndale in the South Wales coalfields. With wife Joan, in 1960 he moved to Gloucester where he became a passed man and eventually a driver at Horton Road.

Gordon immersed himself in many roles at the depot. These included being a member of the LDC, the depot welfare officer and the school liaison officer, touring schools lecturing on the dangers of trespass. He was active within the branch and regularly attended meetings.

In 1989 he acted as chairman of the (now defunct) GWR MAS pensions committee.

Gordon was a big, gruff sort of man who could be an intimidating figure to those who did not know him. In fact, you couldn't wish to meet a kinder, friendlier man.

He was highly scornful of modern, credit-based society, with its "Buy now, pay later" mentality. He preferred saving to buy items rather than resorting to credit – advice he passed to younger colleagues, with whom he easily engaged.

Gordon was an all round sportsman in his youth, and was an avid follower of Gloucester Rugby Club in later years.

He had a fondness for real ale and a roll up - the ties he always wore at work bore the tell-tale scars of his errant fag ash!

With Joan, he travelled the world – including, among other places Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Gordon's image became iconic to many rail enthusiasts after he was pictured, in profile, at the controls of a Western loco in

the book 'Power of the Westerns'. He was quite proud of this celebrity and was rumoured to have a copy of the book at home, marked on the relevant page!

Gordon took early retirement in 1994 and shortly afterwards underwent a heart by-pass operation. You can't keep a good man down and several months later he was attending the annual trip to the Cotswold beer festival!

Gordon was active in retirement, having various part-time jobs including working as a meals-on-wheels driver. He also loved gardening - something reflected in the beautiful garden at his home.

For many of us who worked with him, Gordon was an inspiration. Unselfish, helpful, good company, compassionate.

He had everyone's respect and all our lives have been enriched as a result of knowing him.

Gordon passed away in July after a brave battle with cancer. The crematorium chapel was overflowing with railwaymen past and present, family and friends. The selection of hymns had a distinct Welsh flavour and the eulogy given by his son Huw was extremely moving.

Jerry Matthews - formerly Gloucester, now Bristol EWS

'Da' Blair – a gentleman

IT IS with great sadness that I report the sudden death of Retired Driver Willie Blair, affectionately known to friends and colleagues as 'Da'. A true gentleman and a real train driver, Da sadly passed away on 17 September.

Da had 49 years railway services, his latter years based at Yoker after the closure of Hyndland depot. A keen golfer and handy-man, Da will be truly missed. Our thoughts are with his widow Cathie, daughter Margaret and son Gordon.

Alan Reid Yoker

Cop that! Ray is a Freeman of the City

Not everyone can become a Freeman of the City of London. Which is why Ray Syal, a driver on London Underground is rightly proud of the accolade. Being in the same exalted company as Nelson Mandela, Pavarotti and er..., Cherie Blair, is quite an honour.

Photo and story: Nick West

"Everyone knows about the fact that I can now drive my sheep across London Bridge but in the olden days it was a big honour as it enabled you to trade freely in what was then the centre of London. If you weren't a Freeman you had to pay to trade. Also, and I guess this is a rather dubious privilege, if you were a bad boy, you got to be hanged with a silk scarf, not a rope". Fifteen years as a Special Constable, based at the Snow Hill police station and then membership of the old comrades association got Ray nominated by two livery companies, the bankers and the goldsmiths.

Ray has also done nineteen years as a London Underground driver (27 years in total, including his time as a guard) and although he still loves the job, he speaks with fondness about his early days on the tube. "When I started there was a whole culture and community around the railways and transport in general. It was like a big family, both trains and buses. You could go into any canteen or depot and be part of the

family. That's what I loved about it." He's worked all over the tube – Northern, Bakerloo, Jubilee - and from Neasden to Uxbridge, Morden to Golders Green and is now based at Rickmansworth.

A born and bred Londoner, Ray joined the railways when his stepfather, who worked in signalling at Baker St, got him in. "He got fifty quid for introducing me to the railways". Born in Kings Cross, he can remember a hard early life with his Irish nurse mother and Indian stepfather. "We lived in a right dodgy lot of flats, with dodgy landlords. My real dad is a Cypriot. He hadn't spent much time at home and one day just didn't come back. My stepdad was training to be a doctor when he met my mum but packed it in to work on the railways".

Obviously a man with a keen sense of curiosity about the world he's always loved the multi-cultural nature of London Underground and found his time as a Special Constable both challenging and stimulating. "When I first joined the railways it taught

me how to live. And I built up many friendships. I met a lot of different people from different cultures because the tube was one of the first organisations in this country to embrace workers from abroad.

I enjoyed being a Special Constable in the City because it's so different, what with the history and the architecture. And I also thought it was going to be safer. But then that all changed with the bombs." The introduction of the so-called 'ring of steel' around the perimeter of the Square Mile changed the very nature of policing in the City and set a whole new set of challenges for a Special Constable.

"We had to do 'stop and search' and I used to get really scared with some vehicles. Quite often I'd be on my own. A van would keep going round and round. You could see they were testing the system. I knew it was the IRA. I couldn't prove it but one day a bloke in a van said to me 'you're a Special Constable then? Well, we'll leave you alone because you

don't get paid'. The public can't tell the difference between a Special and a normal bobby. It sent a chill up my spine. I just let him go." He says the shadow of terrorism also haunts his day job. He says it's affected all his colleagues deeply, as do the suicides.

Ray's had his share of suicides. Four to be precise. "They affect you. I had bad dreams and cold sweats. But you can't let it take over your life." He now lives in Ruislip with his partner of seven years, Sue, who works for Mencap. But he's also won an award for saving a woman who was hell bent on killing herself. He chased her down the track and when he brought her back to the platform the commuters were shouting 'let her die'. As he says, 'that's Londoners for you – always in a hurry'.

Ray has a little book given to Freeman of the City of London outlining the way to live your life. One phrase says "he who does anything and knows not why or wherefore acts foolishly". Not something you could say about Ray Syal.

Would you be prepared to be featured in future editions of this column, or know someone who would be a good subject? If you do, please let us know at the ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB or journal@aslef.org.uk

LETTERS to the EDITOR



YOU TELL US

These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB or by email to journal@aslef.org.uk

Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can.

This month we continue our STAR LETTER feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

A safety revelation

I'm not easily impressed – but last night I encountered a revelation. It is a piece of technology that can radically improve railway safety and make our jobs safer and less stressful.

I was route-conducting Network Rail's Structure Gauging Train. For part of the night I rode in the train because the driver signed that portion of line. While I was there I discovered that the train was fitted with a forward-looking infra-red camera. A monitor displayed the route ahead in amazing clarity and detail in real time. We were running on a very dark, rural route and I realised that the monitor I was watching gave a much clearer view than the driver could see.

The technicians told me that this type of equipment even provides a good image in foggy conditions – and it's not particularly expensive. It strikes me that it would eliminate a great deal of stressful crawling around in the dark and fog searching for signals, stations or speed restrictions. People and animals stood out especially well in the pitch blackness – so we'd be able to

see stray animals, trackside workers, trespassers and potential suicides at a far greater distance than by simple eyesight alone.

Having a small infra-red monitor on our instrument panel would provide an enormous safety enhancement and can potentially make our night time work much safer and easier. I'd like to see the union take a closer look at infra-red technology and press for its introduction. Any driver who sees it will instantly understand its enormous potential: it turns darkness into light.

Arno Brooks Chairman -
Knottingly & Ferrybridge
branch

That family feeling

I just thought I'd take the time to say how pleased I am about the support I received from my ASLEF workmates during a recent spell off work.

I'm a fairly new driver at Workington in Cumbria and I was off work for about 3 weeks with back trouble which advanced into a trapped nerve causing severe pain in the legs. While I was off I was amazed at the number of calls and visits made to me to offer support and ask about my welfare. I am especially grateful to branch secretary George Armstrong and Jimmy Tinnion from the LDC.

A good union isn't just about pay rises and representation – it's more of a 'work family'. That's what makes me proud to be an ASLEF member.

Thanks to all members at Workington for their generous concern.

David Hardie Northern Rail
- Workington

Shooting the messenger

I somehow missed the article by Keith Norman in the May 2007 issue headed, 'Outdated gun laws belong in another era'.

I have been a sporting shooter all my life. For the last 3 years I have been promoting safe shooting in schools as a volunteer with the British Association for Shooting and Conservation. We have

cooperation from various police authorities and school liaison officers.

But I want to know what these issues have to do with a railway union? My union is supposed to look after its members' interests at work – not push individual opinions on subjects that have nothing to do with the union.

The railway industry has strong historical links with the shooting community, and I know 6 other people in the Chester depot who are involved in shooting sports.

Biased, anti-gun articles insult all legitimate gun owners. We are trying to highlight the fact that most gun crime is committed by people with no legal right to own a gun.

I cannot reconcile paying money to ASLEF if it works against my right to 'bear arms' as a legitimate sportsman.

Mr A. Gavin Driver -
Chester

I'm alive! honest!

In the last few months many people have phoned my wife to console her as they had heard that I had passed away. To correct this error I would like to borrow a famous quotation and say, 'The rumours of my demise are greatly exaggerated!'

I retired in 1992 after 50 years service. During that time I worked for 25 years at Ripple Lane and was involved in most activities at the depot. Following a family tragedy I had to leave the depot and worked my last 10 years in the Norwich area.

However, with God willing I will reach the grand old age of 80 in November – when my state pension will increase by 25p!

With this extra wealth I intend to have a party and invite my old friends and colleagues, including those who heard the rumours of my demise, and even those who started it. Then as my old London East Enders would say, 'We will have a right old knees up!'

Bob Lilly Norwich

Unexpected praise!

I would like to thank ASLEF for the support it gave to me after

an accident at work. The union took a case forward against National Express (Wessex Trains) when equipment failed on a unit that I was working on at Bristol TM. After all, none of us know when we'll need support and help from ASLEF. So many members moan about the union – but give little praise when people sort things out for us all. It's why I've been a member for 34 years! Keep up the good work.

R.J. Coles – Exeter

Pedal power beats 4x4s

I'd like to respond to the letter about 4x4s from Mr Harrington in the September Journal. I cannot understand the need to keep a 4x4 running all year, just because of one night's snow in 2006!

In the 50s and 60s when I worked for the western region in the Welsh valleys, we had snow from November to Easter. I never failed to book on even though sometimes this involved travelling 18 miles on a push bike.

Ken Greaves retired
member – Faversham

Two views of care

Through the pages of the Journal, Motherwell Branch would like to commend the actions of two of our Scotrail members.

During a medical emergency they came to the aid of a passenger who was suffering from a suspected heart attack. They administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and heart massage until paramedics arrived. These actions demonstrate the dedication and professionalism of our members in the course of their duties.

Unfortunately their employer does not seem to hold the same view. After acknowledging that both drivers had been through a traumatic experience Scotrail management threatened the drivers with loss of pay if they did not attend for duty the following day.

This highlights the disregard that management hold for the duty of care shown by drivers and ASLEF members.

Once again we would like to thank and commend the drivers for their professional handling of what was an extremely stressful situation.

Andy Jones Secretary -
Motherwell Branch

Victory – and dad's army

I am writing to express my sincere thanks to ASLEF for its absolute support during my recent - and successful - tribunal hearing at Victory House.

As a London Underground Duty Manager it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the details of the hearing – but I would like to confirm that all managers are entitled to health & safety representation. On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people for their efforts.

Thanks to Thompsons Solicitors for appointing David McElrea, a competent legal representative who showed genuine interest and offered continued support throughout my case. Thanks also to my barrister Tom Coghlin (Cloisters Chambers) for an exceptionally well presented and defended brief.

I'm also grateful to Steve Grant (District Organiser) and Terry Wilkinson (EC) for their support and attendance throughout the 2 day hearing. Finally special thanks to Mark Dyson (MATS Functional Council) for his help in securing this crucial ruling.

I'm reminded of a wise man wearing a Dad's Army uniform who once said, 'They don't like

SMD RUINED MY CAREER



As a member of ASLEF for 45 years I am writing about my concerns over disciplinary procedures at my home depot of Nottingham.

I started work in 1962 as a cleaner at Nottingham, becoming a driver in 1978. I am proud to say I have only had one incident - in August 1997.

On 20 July I left Stockport with a Liverpool-Norwich service, a journey I've taken regularly for the last 10 years. The signaller at Edgely Junction wrong routed the train towards Crewe so I stopped my train. I was about 60 metres past the signal. The signaller admitted his mistake.

When I arrived at my destination some 20 minutes late, a Driver Manager interviewed me about the incident. After filling in the paperwork my permit to drive authority was taken from me. I felt insulted.

I met my manager daily but had to wait 4 weeks for download results. I was then told I would be categorised for a year and given six points on my record. I objected – especially in view of my previous good record. I was informed that this was the set procedure and I was mistaken in thinking each case would be judged on its merits. Further I was told if I refused to sign the SMED plan, I would not drive again. Although I found this intolerable, I reluctantly signed.

I returned to work after the incident on 21 July, due to take a train to Liverpool. I was agitated, worrying that, as a Specially Monitored Driver, my career was threatened – and I was taken ill on duty. An ambulance took me to the Queen's Medical Centre where I was kept in overnight because of increased heart-rate and raised blood pressure. I am now off work, on medication and have a further hospital appointment arranged.

There is no doubt that my condition was brought about by the stress of the past five weeks, as I have previously been in good health.

I am not the only driver at Nottingham who is being treated in this way. There are at least 12 colleagues off roster awaiting results of incidents – and wondering if they will have a job at the end of the process.

Management should not deal with dedicated drivers in this manner. Personally I am considering early retirement from Central Trains – giving up a job I have always enjoyed because of the events of the past few weeks. I believe I am a conscientious driver, who is never late or absent without good reason. This obviously counts for nothing with present day management.

I'd like to know what ASLEF thinks of procedures like SMED plans and points. I find it degrading and unhelpful to suspend drivers for long periods.

John Voce – Driver - Nottingham.

it up 'em Mr. Mainwaring!'

Paul McCarthy Duty
Manager Trains - Wood Lane

Many thanks

After being on the receiving end of behaviour which can only be described in polite terms as 'bad' by my line manager, I was paid off by Freightliner in February of this year.

Throughout this time my District Officer Colin Smith has been exemplary in the care, help and

support which he has offered and given.

Might I take this opportunity to thank the General Secretary and his officers, especially Colin Smith to whom I will be forever indebted for his help and

support through what has been a very difficult and traumatic time for both myself and my family. And my thanks to all staff at Arkwright Road.

Stuart Mair Freightliner
Intermodal

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk



COLLECTOR requires ASLEF-Coalville NUM 1984/5 strike badges. Will pay £125. Also selling chrome and gilt badges for Wath and Mexborough at £10 the pair. Contact Barry Jones on 01709 588648 or 25 Windermere Close, Mexborough, South Yorkshire S64 0PT.



NEW! ASLEF LGBT Badges are now available for sale. If you wish to purchase one send a cheque made payable to ASLEF for £5.00 (this includes postage and packaging) to the Equalities Adviser at ASLEF Head Office.

CLASS 90 locomotive Tie Slides, Cufflinks & Badges, available in high quality gold & silver plate. Tie Slides £5, Badges £3.50, Cufflinks £9.00. Postage £1.00 per order. Contact Brian Aitkenhead on 07957403679 or at 19 Pine Close, Rendlesham, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 2GD.



FAVERSHAM CENTENARY BADGE: the Faversham branch was 100 years old on 23 June and will be holding a celebration/presentation evening in September. The branch has struck a limited number of badges (numbered on the back) available at £10 each and plain ones at £5 each – plus £1 p&p. Badges are available from branch secretary Steve Gurdler (steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk).

Change of address form

Name.....

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AT Lewisham just 50 years ago, on 4 December 1957, in dense fog, the late-running 16.56 from Cannon Street to Ramsgate, hauled by 34066 Battle of Britain class loco, passed a signal at danger. At about 18.20, the loco crashed into the rear of the ten-car 1718 emu (electric multiple unit) which was travelling from Charing Cross to Hayes. 37 passengers and the guard were killed on the Hayes train, and 49 people died on the Ramsgate train.

A SERIES OF DISASTERS

The foggy conditions had meant services were running very late that evening, and the signalman at Parks Bridge Junction was confused as to which train was which. He thought that the train standing at Parks Bridge Junction was the Mid Kent line service to Hayes – but in fact it was a Hastings service. Thinking it was the Hayes train, the signalman held it until he could route it towards Ladywell – but the Hayes service was still at the signal behind.

The impact of the crash destroyed the 8th coach – while the 9th coach was forced over and through it. Then it swung out and demolished one of the supports of the bridge carrying the Nunhead to Lewisham line, causing the bridge to collapse onto the wreckage.

This collapse caused the traction current to short circuit on the Nunhead line - just as the 1722 from Holborn Viaduct to Dartford approached the bridge. Luckily the driver stopped short of the collapsed



SPARE A THOUGHT FOR DRIVER TREW

says Dave Bull, the secretary of the union's Ramsgate branch

section of the bridge and undoubtedly saved many more lives by doing so.

WHY DID DRIVER TREW NOT REACT?

But why did driver Trew of Ramsgate depot not see and react to the 2 yellows and

single yellow signals prior to the red? The fog appears to be the main culprit. It was extremely thick that day - and it got worse as it turned dark. In addition, the double yellow and single yellow signals were driven from the left - which with the reduced visibility would

have made them hard if not impossible to see.

It is also true that New Cross to St Johns is in a small valley with brick embankments on either side – which made it a known problem-spot during fog. Colonel Wilson, who conducted the inquiry, asked driver Trew what the visibility was. The driver said it was 20 to 30 yards. However, he could not answer when he was asked why he had not told his fireman to look out for signals. As Colonel Wilson said - driver Trew was in great shock. In fact when he was examined again in May 1958, he was still too shocked and confused to give a proper explanation of his actions on the day of the crash.

COULD IT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?

The inquiry into the crash asked if the accident could have been avoided – and concluded that it could have been. If AWS, or its equivalent, had been fitted to this line it would have warned and/or stopped the Ramsgate train from passing the signal at danger. Why had it not been installed? Cost! It was decided to install it on the Waterloo main line as this only had Semaphore signals.

It all sounds rather familiar doesn't it? The decades might change - but excuses don't. Driver Trew was tried for manslaughter on 21 April 1958. The jury failed to agree, and at the second trial on 8 May he was acquitted. He left the Railway service and died within a year at the age of 62.



THE Locomotive Journal of January 1958 made some interesting comments on the crash although it was restricted by the fact that the Ministry of Transport (MOT) report had not been issued.

It pointed out that:

ONE The Society is 'rendering all necessary assistance' to the steam train driver and fireman, Bros. W. Trew and C. Hoare of Ramsgate Branch - and the 'two electric motormen (who escaped uninjured), Bros. Skilton (London Bridge Branch) and Corke (Orpington branch).

TWO 'This disastrous occurrence has made a profound impression upon the public not only because of the terrible circumstances but also due to the overwhelming

sense of contrast with the normal accepted course of events.' The 1956 MOT annual report revealed that there were no fatalities and only 3 serious injuries as 1,500 million passengers were carried on more than 400 million train miles.

THREE In October of the same year – 1956 – MOT road accident figures showed 'a grim total of 537 deaths on the highways for that single month alone' – a matter, it recorded of 'little or no public comment.'

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FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice - both for members and for their dependents. In the first six months of this year we have secured £1,442,360 in compensation claims! Call the helpline on 0808 100 8009

EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 07980 996159.

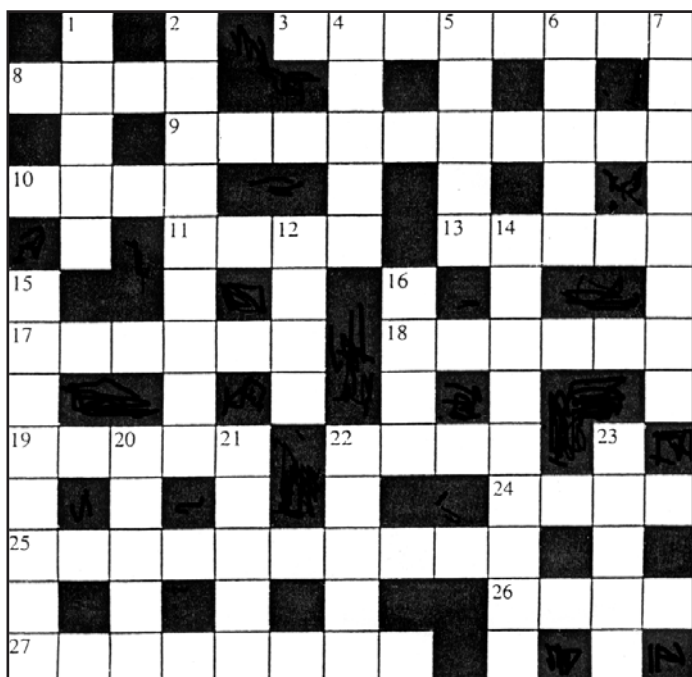
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ASLEF more than just a union



Prize Crossword No. 19

set by TLC



Solution to Crossword No 18 which appeared in the October edition of the ASLEF Journal. Congratulations to **Mr N. Goodall** from **Eastleigh, Hants**.

ACROSS 1 Iron horse 8 On the platform 11 Oban 12 False 13 Over 16 Outcome 17 Spartan 18 Cleaner 20 Popular 21 Also 22 Adore 23 Asia 26 Mint condition 27 Calendars **DOWN** 2 Ruhr 3 No place 4 Onassis 5 Safe 6 In partnership 7 Private lesson 9 Ton of coal 10 Trunk road 14 Loans 15 Happy 19 Red rose 20 Paraded 24 Etna 25 Stir

Thanks for all your responses to the 18th ASLEF crossword in the October edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

CLUES ACROSS

- 3 Your 'ticket to ride'! (4,4)
8 Hire car (4)
9 Old 'Puffing Billy' (5,5)
10 Movie (4)
11 Female relative (4)
13 A wanderer (5)
17 Part of the foot (6)
18 Occur, take place (6)
19 One who makes an effort (5)
22 Word said at end of a prayer (4)
24 Make money from a job (4)
25 Workers in our industry (10)
26 Yorkshireman (nick-name) (4)
27 Reprimand firmly (8)

- 2 Take to pieces (9)
4 Not together (5)
5 Language of Ancient Rome (5)
6 Warning sound of danger (5)
7 Sound made by a bell (4,4)
12 Short sleeps (4)
14 Competitors (9)
15 Station named after a Queen (8)
16 Pal (4)
20 Set phrase, mode of expression (5)
21 Type of tree (5)
22 Deep pit (5)
23 Foot pedal on a vehicle (5)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Wireless (5)

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25



MARKS & SPENCER

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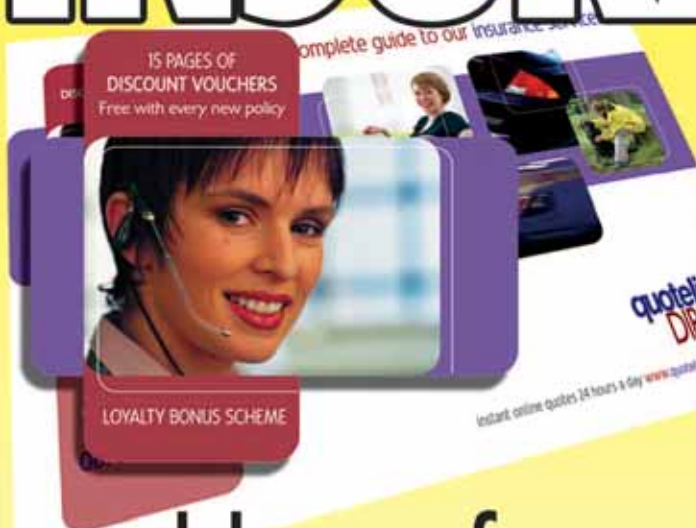
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